

**Bedbugs***(Cimex lectularius)***What are bedbugs?**

Bedbugs are small insects that feed on the blood of humans and animals (host). Some bedbugs live in the wild; others live in the homes of people. Adult bedbugs are about ¼ inch in length. They are oval in shape, but are flattened from top to bottom. Bedbugs can be off-white in color to a light tan, deep brown or burnt orange. The host's dark blood may be apparent in the body of the bug. Bedbugs cannot fly.

**Who is at risk for bedbugs?**

Bedbugs can be found worldwide and have been reported more frequently in recent years. They most often are found in rooms where people sleep, and they generally hide near beds or other furniture used for sleeping.

**What symptoms do bedbugs cause?**

Bedbugs generally bite during the night while hosts are asleep. The bites are painless. While feeding, the bugs inject their saliva into the skin. The sore caused by a bite looks similar to a mosquito bite. After a prolonged period of time, the bites may cause the host to have a mild to intense allergic reaction. Scratching the sores may lead to a secondary infection.

**How soon do symptoms appear?**

The sores occur immediately after the bedbugs bite.

**How do bedbugs spread?**

Bedbugs hide in small crevices, may invade luggage, furniture, clothing, pillows, boxes and other objects and are spread when these are moved between apartments, homes and hotels. Used furniture (i.e., bed frames, mattresses, etc.) are at the greatest risk of storing bedbugs and their eggs. Bedbugs can pass also between adjoining apartments through holes in walls. Bats or birds also may introduce bedbugs into a home.

**When and for how long is a person able to spread bed bugs?**

Bedbugs can survive for months without feeding, so they may be present in apparently vacant and clean apartments. Bedbugs are able to spread as long as the host is living with them.

**How is a person diagnosed?**

Many different types of insects resemble bedbugs. Samples of bugs should be collected and submitted to an entomologist for evaluation. Bedbugs should be suspected by physicians if residents complain of bites that occurred while they were sleeping.

**What is the treatment for bedbug sores?**

Sores may be treated with antihistamines and corticosteroids to reduce allergic reactions and inflammation. Bedbugs are not known to transmit any infectious diseases.

**Do past bedbug lesions make a person immune?**

No. There is no immunity to bedbug lesions. They are similar to mosquito bites and can reoccur.

**Should children or others be excluded from day care, school, work or other activities if they have bedbug lesions?**

No. People do not need to be excluded for having bedbug lesions.

**What can be done to prevent the spread of bedbugs?**

Managing bedbugs requires cleaning, room modifications and possibly insecticidal treatments to the residence. Clutter should be reduced at the residence. Infested rooms should be thoroughly cleaned. Infested surfaces should be scrubbed with a stiff brush to dislodge eggs. Vacuuming should be done to remove bedbugs from cracks and crevices. All possible hiding spots should be inspected. Mattress bags can be used to trap bedbugs so they eventually die. Holes or cracks in walls should be sealed. A pest control operator should be consulted regarding the situation. If you are a tenant, the property manager should be contacted.

**Additional Information:**

Additional information is available at [www.ndhealth.gov/disease](http://www.ndhealth.gov/disease) or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resource: Harvard School of Public Health: [www.hsph.harvard.edu/bedbugs/#what](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/bedbugs/#what)

